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ABSTRACT

This working paper presents guidelines for negotiating learning contracts between tutors and postsecondary students enrolled in a vocational program. The first two sections discuss the general rationale for negotiating curricula and the specific benefits of conducting such negotiations with students over the age of 16. Addressed next is the importance of allowing students a choice in their course of study, making students aware of their instructional alternatives, maintaining open relationships with students, and developing shared goals and understanding among tutors and students. Negotiation problems and strategies and information tutors need before entering into negotiations with students are outlined. Covered next is the importance of flexibility in managing available instructional resources. The final section examines the content of student-tutor contracts and includes sample student-college agreements and contracts. (MN)

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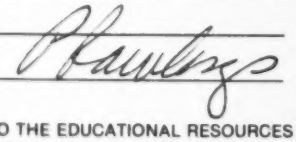

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NEGOTIATING THE CURRICULUM
TUTORS AND STUDENTS

NEGOTIATING THE CURRICULUM: GENERAL RATIONALE

SECTION 1

> Negotiation is a process by which two or more people can arrive at an agreed decision through discussion and, where necessary, mutual concessions. Its alternatives are prescription and compliance-sometimes softened by consultation-confrontation, and drift. The last is often the most hazardous in that it allows people to think that they are making their own decisions,until suddenly they bump into other people's interests, territory and regulations.

The primary rationale for negotiation is that the co-operation of more than one person, or group of people, is required. Compliance, as opposed to co-operation, can be achieved by the combining of authority or power with giving orders. There are obvious occasions when compliance holds a higher priority than co-operation; for example, in an emergency, or when dealing with very young children. Equally, there is,in all organisations, established practice; for example, on hours of attendance and safe use of equipment, which it would be time-wasting and unproductive to repeatedly renegotiate. Further, because resources are finite, and early decisions limit later decisions, not all areas of action are negotiable at any one time.

However, negotiation and co-operation can have positive outcomes. They require a shared comprehension of circumstances and alternatives, and therefore, in turn, demand information and explanation. Talking through possible plans of action - unless interests and/or personalities are irreconcilable - frequently reduces misunderstanding and mutual suspicion. Plans are carried through with increased involvement and enthusiasm, and those concerned are less likely to look for reasons why "it couldn't work..." when they have themselves contributed to the decision making. For example, one of the strongest arguments for mutually agreed learning agendas, profiles and reciprocal contracts is that the talking through and two-way explanations which accompany them significantly increase the commitment of both students and tutors.

Negotiation is also an economic way of making decisions in that it can make use of all the availabl ideas and experience. Prescription and compliance assume that assigned decision makers possess the necessary and appropriate information, experience and understanding, and that those who are to comply, do not.

This is unlikely to be so in the current scenario of continuing development and change, where neither individuals nor single organisations can claim a sufficiently broad perspective. In developing programmes of vocational preparation, where the expertise of vocational and general areas is to be combined in integrated learning, and all tutors are concerned with basic skills, negotiation and co-operation are the most appropriate methods.

Negotiated, as opposed to prescribed, arrangements are a practical response to individual or local differences. This applies equally to individual students with personal needs, strengths and ambitions, and individual colleges, community projects and industries undertaking training with particular expertise, staff and equipment. Negotiation because of individual differences is relevant across all curricular contexts: in the achievement of individual learning agendas, in selecting work placements, in relating basic and specific skills, in agreeing the respective contributions of on and off-the-job training, and in recognising that one college's programme may legitimately differ from another's.

Whatever the context, negotiation is an education experience. Information, ideas and explanation can be traded, and all parties understand more than before. Additionally, the processes involved in negotiation, of listening and tolerating, of being obliged to be clear, and of marshalling argument and evidence are life skills of value to all students, tutors, supervisors and managers.

GENERAL RATIONALE: SUMMARY

1. Negotiation is an alternative to prescription, confrontation and drift.

2. It is a means of achieving co-operation between individuals and groups.

3. The exchange of information and explanation which is part of negotiation can increase involvement and commitment.

4. Negotiation can make use of all available ideas and experience.

5. Negotiated arrangements can respond to individual and local needs.

6. Negotiation is an educational experience.

* * * * *

NEGOTIATING THE CURRICULUM: TUTORS AND STUDENTS

SECTION 2

> "It may be more important to establish effective procedures by which the curriculum can be influenced by the young people concerned, than it is to get the 'content' of the scheme absolutely right in the first place. Making such feedback part of the scheme itself ensures that it is responsive to variations in need and contributes towards developing autonomy in the young people by encouraging in them a responsibility for their own learning".
>
> Experience Reflection Learning F.E.U.

Student:tutor negotiation can take place:

i. before a student selects a scheme or programme ie with school careers advisers, Careers Officers and representatives of college courses, managing agencies, community projects etc,

ii. during Induction, when the make up of group and individual programmes is decided,

iii. at any subsequent change of direction, or re-shaping of programme,

iv. at assessment, and

v. in daily working relationships.

Students are individuals. Added to their inherent strengths and weaknesses, they have, in 16 or so years of school education, personal, family and social life, developed preferences and antipathies, skills, dispositions and accustomed ways of working - or not working. Some of these may be obstacles to their further achievement, perhaps even happiness. Others are abilities and qualities which need encouragement and expansion. To ignore these given and acquired differences is to risk both commitment and relevance. Encouraging students to take account of their own qualities, and involving them in decisions as to their own learning needs, gives them direct experience of responsibility which is necessary for their development as self-reliant adults. Ideally, individual strengths and weaknesses are the starting points for a programme; in practice, there is usually some accommodation between what is needed and what is available. This accommodation can be decided by authority, routine or negotiation. If individual needs are to be given priority, the third method must be the one most generally used.

In programmes with given syllabuses and assessment requirements, students elect to join a course, having at least formal information on its content. A given syllabus reduces but does not remove the space available for negotiation; observation, for example of G.C.E. O level teaching in several schools and colleges provides evidence of the scope remaining for interpretation, emphasis and creativity.

Similarly, students already in employment or with confident employment futures undertake forms of further education in which the curricula are derived from the claimed demands of those occupations. Here, space for interpretation and development is often limited in exchange for nationally accredited qualifications.

Even so, skilled tutors with access to diversified learning resources, and working with moderate class sizes, have devised individual, and small group programmes adapted to personal learning needs and working places, and the requirements of particular employers. Examples of this may be seen in U.V.P. and TRADEC schemes. The inter-relation of programmes, modes of teaching, size of group and degree of practicable consultation and negotiation is illustrated on page 15.

Programmes of vocational preparation follow an alternative curriculum format. In Vocational Preparation, the Further Education Unit describes this:

> "the curriculum will have to be tailored to suit the needs of the learners rather than the learners being selected to fit ready-made programmes. This means that the diagnosis of learning needs and the identification of appropriate learning activities need to be discussed with the learners, as part of the curriculum process. A form of educational negotiation therefore becomes part of the role of all tutors responsible for vocational preparation".

The combined absence of given curricula and clear employment futures presents vocational preparation tutors with both opportunities and problems. Foremost among these is providing satisfaction through relevance. It is no overstatement to say that finding studies which both tutors and their students will recognise as relevant is one of the major responsibilities of such tutors. Part of their search will be aided by colleagues, Industrial Training Boards and the Careers Service, and publications by the Manpower Services Commission, the Further Education Unit etc. A large part will be derived from the evident needs, interests and aspirations of the students themselves. "Starting from the student" becomes an increasing practice, not only for its practical good sense but because there is nowhere else to start.

Students entering vocational preparation do so from a number of backgrounds. Some, given school-leaver employment, would have proceeded to apprenticeships involving further education and training. Others, probably left school with strong disinclinations to continue it and would, in other circumstances, have been accepted into unskilled or semi-skilled employment with little or no provision for training. Thus in vocational preparation groups may be those who lack basic skills, those who learn through practical applications, those who work well in groups, those who lack confidence to admit difficulties, and those who can progress given constant reinforcement and assistance ... (just to start the list!). Therefore not only content, but methods and means require to be negotiated.

Among the basic abilities lacked by many students are those connected with making non-trivial decisions, weighing up alternatives and making and implementing plans.

Planning and decision making can be practised in simulation exercises. More real and relevant, and therefore a stronger imperative to effort, are actual decisions which concern the student and his immediate circumstances. Strategies which provide experience and reflection in decision making include giving students control over individual work in a numeracy or communications workshop, and monitoring progress through a checklist or profile. It is an irony of present demands upon education and training that young people without work, and denied its important maturing influence, are required to exhibit more initiative, more self-confidence and more self-organising abilities in order to cope with disappointment, uncertainty and unstructured time.

RATIONALE: SUMMARY

1. Students at 16 are individuals with established preferences antipathies and ways of working.

2. Vocational Preparation programmes are essentially derived from student needs.

3. Each student should find the learning required of him personally relevant.

4. Learning should proceed at a pace appropriate to each student's abilities (which doesn't mean slow and undemanding!).

5. Students, by having to think realistically, decide upon priorities and make decisions, can increase their confidence and competence in these lifeskills.

* * * * *

NECESSARY CONDITIONS

SECTION 3

> "In the initial period, student opinions are seldom supported by evidence, and choice tends to be unconsidered. Guidance, help and information and the establishment of staff/student relationships are vital".[1]

Student : tutor negotiation cannot exist in a vacuum, nor be added to a system which is otherwise unchanged. To be effective, four necessary conditions must prevail:

- Availability of choice
- Information and understanding
- Open relationships
- Shared goals.

AVAILABILITY OF CHOICE

An apparent statement of the obvious, but difficult to provide, given established organisations with specialist staff, accommodation and equipment. Student choice will therefore be within practically limited alternatives, determined by the number and range of schemes available in the area, travelling distances, his or her capacity to learn, and the flexibility of providing organisations. At any point, resources determine choice, but in the longer term, priorities can be reordered, staff retrain and adapt and curricula be redesigned. FE colleges, because of their entrepreneurial character, have a record in doing this.

INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING

Choice without information is not choice at all, but the performance of a ritual. Information and understanding of programmes of vocational preparation can be conveyed to intending students in a number of ways:

i. by paper description - handouts and leaflets preferably supplemented by photographs, video film and tape/slide presentations,

ii. by talking - explaining, questioning and answering; before leaving school, at Careers Office interviews, and in discussions between tutors, present students and intending students,

iii. by a creative use of profiles, in which the intentions and ambitions of both students and tutors can be clarified and the next steps in a learning agenda negotiated, and

iv. by experience.

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1. From a tutor at Basingstoke College.

Induction into the philosophy, content and strategies of a programme rely on a combination of all these methods, which takes time and the recognition that such processes are part of the teacher's role and the programme's function.

OPEN RELATIONSHIPS

An equal relationship between students and tutors is unlikely to be achieved, by reason of such separating factors as age, status and power, experience, and the expectations each have of the other. But an open relationship in which both groups accept an obligation to 'deal straight' with the other, explaining their actions and preferences, and avoiding status - reinforcing strategies is difficult, but capable of achievement.

SHARED GOALS

Negotiation requires that those taking part share in each other's goals. Students who resent being on a scheme, and have little intention of working on anything it offers, are poor negotiating material. Similarly, tutors who have shallow sympathy and optimism for the aims of vocational preparation, and its students, are unlikely to contribute the effort, adaptability and collaboration that is needed. The requirement of shared goals does not stop at students and their immediate tutors. The co-operation of teaching, managerial, administrative and maintenance staff elsewhere in the organisation is needed to provide reinforcement, rather than counter examples. It is therefore necessary that the whole organisation understands and supports what is being attempted in classroom and workshop.

NECESSARY CONDITIONS: SUMMARY

1. Student choice; alternatives from which a student can genuinely choose.

2. Information on, and understanding of the alternatives.

3. Open relationships; a reduction in power and status differentials.

4. Shared goals and understanding.

The four conditions can be recalled by the mnemonic CHIPS: CHOICE, INFORMATION, POWER AND SHARED GOALS.

* * * * *

PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES

SECTION FOUR

PREPAREDNESS OF STUDENTS

> "Because the course is so flexible, it is difficult to keep 'tabs' on students. A very few therefore see it as an opportunity to do nothing".[1]

> "Many students may resent being put into a position which requires them to make decisions".

> "Students may avoid conflict issues with teachers because of their generalised lack of power and status in the school system, or because of previous conditioning from authorities at home and in school. It is also quite possible that conditions of classroom instruction at all levels facilitate passive dependent behaviour - perhaps the traditional mode of instruction as one-way communication-from being able to voice their views in large groups".
>
> Power and Conflict in the Student-Teacher Relationship
> David W Jamieson and Kenneth W Thomas.

Unresponsiveness and inaction are most easily practised in large groups, where "doing nothing" can often pass unnoticed. In many instances, the inactivity and "boredom" of students have been developed by them as survival strategies in the back rows of overlarge school classes. As one of the remedies to this, there should be early emphasis upon the importance of the individual, through counselling, small group work and personal attention. Wherever practicable, low student: tutor ratios should continue throughout the programme,[2] but where limited resources prevent this, they should be retained in two places: in the early weeks of the programme during orientation and induction, and on a regular basis for at least a half day a week.

The individual, and therefore individually demanding character of a programme can also be emphasised by providing one-to-one tutorials, individual timetables, learning programmes and profiles, and student:tutor contracts. To these can be added: talking to students individually by name (rather than as members of a class group), setting individual tasks, and expecting accountability based on contracts.

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1. The statements quoted above are from tutors in the colleges which were consulted during the preparation of this document.

2. See the chart examining the relationship between resources and the curriculum on page 15.

In encouraging commitment to negotiated programmes, it is important that they should be individually rewarding as well as demanding. Individual projects and achievements should be clearly identified, and, as appropriate, praised, and opportunities sought for the public presentation of a survey, or the exhibition of a constructed article. Where formal or informal student: tutor contracts are used, the achievement of contracted targets should receive recognition within the group.

The activity and responsibility required in negotiation can be practised in minor decisions and in simulation exercises. The first days of a programme provide opportunities for deciding such issues as the length and timing of refreshment breaks, the boundaries of what are seen as discourteous and crude language, and, where this is not already covered by regulation, when and where students may smoke. In order that the reality of negotiation is established, it is important that early decision making is carefully and honestly handled. Where organisational regulation and established standards remove issues from negotiation, such should be clearly explained. The understanding that some decisions are not negotiable does not disprove negotiation, but rather clarifies the constraints within which all decisions have to be made.

"In the initial period, student opinions are seldom supported by evidence, and choice tends to be unconsidered".[1]

"My father wants me to do Spanish".[1]

One of the most frequent reservations expressed in discussion of student: tutor negotiation is on the preparedness of young students to make important decisions at an early stage in a programme. They may be confused by unfamiliar choices - "World of Work" and "Computer Appreciation" - or by the unfamiliarity of making a choice. Their focus of thinking during the last years of school may have been upon getting a job, and now that no job is available, they are offered the unknown territory of Further Education or work-based YTS. Even with information and counselling from Careers teachers and Careers officers, they may have only elementary understanding of the requirements of different forms of employment. They may carry received decisions from their parents and friends that may combine unrealistically with the results of diagnostic testing. And not unreasonably, they may be finding it difficult to adapt to changing patterns of local employment.

One of the remedies to this situation can be found in closer co-operation between schools, the Careers Service and colleges, so that full information on opportunities in employment, and further education and training plus realistic counselling and guidance can better equip minimum age school leavers to make sensible decisions about themselves. These processes can continue between school and Further Education, at Careers Offices and colleges, and in the induction and orientation phases of a programme.

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1. From statements by tutors and students.

The "Access Unit" set up at Bradford College provides a model to be followed. In purpose built accommodation, convenient to the entrance to the building, seconded staff operate a full-time information and counselling service for young school leavers.

A second remedy lies within the structuring of vocational preparation programmes. A period of sampling and/or 'work exposure' is often included to offer students an experiential base for their decisions. There are two counter-arguments to this: that sampling or work exposure may be too insubstantial to yield sufficient experience, and that students can lose motivation when required to work on areas outside their choice. The second is an objection frequently voiced by both tutors and Careers Officers. Part of the problem may arise from students being exposed to sampling without sufficient explanation of its purpose, another from too wide a spectrum being attempted.

In addition to pre-programme information and explanation, the two strongest strategies within a programme are time and resources allocated to one-to-one and small group counselling, and the delaying of decisions until after some weeks of familiarisation and discussion.

A thought-provoking observation from a tutor in one college was that, contrary to general opinion, young people do not lack negotiating skills - that in fact they are practised in their use in playground, sports-field, youth club and family discussions. What they lack, he argued, was the expectation that they will be permitted to use them inside the doors of an educational institution.

PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES: SUMMARY

1. Students may be unwilling to take on responsibility for their own learning. Responsibility can be encouraged by concentrating upon activities that identify and reward individual effort.

2. Students can develop negotiating skills in tackling minor issues of course procedure, and through simulation exercises.

3. Students may be unequipped to make informed and considered decisions about themselves and their futures. Information, explanation and, where possible, experience both at school, and in the early stages of a programme may assist the situation. Also the delaying of important decisions.

4. It may be that they have negotiating skills - but do not expect to be allowed to use them!

* * * * *

PREPAREDNESS OF TUTORS

SECTION FIVE

> "The teachers ... are the technology and we must start from them".
> (Reid & Walker, 1975)

> "The tutor must spend a great deal of time sorting out schemes of work that reflect all the student choices. Additionally, the staff need to work out as a group before the course starts exactly what they are trying to achieve. The staff need to meet regularly to plan the programme, especially where constant renegotiation is involved".[1]

Negotiation makes heavy demands on resources: on staffing to permit counselling and one-to-one tutorials, on learning materials and equipment to implement individual and small group programmes, on the skills and willingness of tutors to adapt to different ways of working - and, underpinning them all, on time. In practical terms, the received model of a tutor, going into class, armed with his syllabus and a detailed time plan, has to give way to working to checklists and preparing practicable options. Added to this, the tutor has to know about the resources available to students - and their possible difficulties - in college, work placement and community, and be willing to talk through ideas and problems with students at what may seem wasteful length.

The preparation of alternatives rather than one applicable-to-all, class plan requires time, inventiveness and the co-operation of colleagues. The traditional use of textbooks and blackboard notes, validated by a given syllabus, is inapplicable in a programme which is constructed around student needs and local and unstable circumstances. What we have to devise are teaching and learning strategies and materials which support a more open and loosely structured way of working, but which retain direction, and the satisfaction of progress. (Westbury, 1973). These strategies are appropriate to individual work in numeracy and communication workshops, in which students can pace themselves. A highly successful motivator is the use of learning programmes on microcomputers. Here with the compulsive attraction of a Space Invader context, students can become more numerate, literate, and structured in their thinking and gain in understanding of the potential of computers.

Probably a necessary warning for many committed tutors is against the dangers of over-teaching. Many skills are better learned, under general guidance and management, by a process of making mistakes and trying again, than by direct instruction. This is particularly the case in progressing

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1. From a tutor at Basingstoke College.

social and life skills, where the most important ability that a student can gain is that of learning for himself. There are, of course, obvious exceptions to this where processes are highly complicated, or there are Health and Safety hazards. Our task, as tutors, is to equip our students to manage without us.

> "It was felt that anyone going to teach on it (the Into Work programme) needed to begin from a position of optimism about the student; it was essential to believe that a student had potential for growth, learning and development in response to the course, whatever his track record may be. It was also necessary that the reality of students responding differently to different staff be acknowledged and seen as part of the overall design of any 'offer' made to students". (Grubb Institute, 1980).

Important personal and professional skills are also demanded; the ability to listen, guide and counsel rather than direct (FEU, 1982c); to identify opportunities for learning in immediate and local developments and to recognise when a student can work best alone, and when prompting and assistance are needed.

Tutors are more likely to win authority through students recognising their expertise, professional competence and empathy, than through any respect for their position within the institution, or access to coercion.

Two areas in vocational preparation programmes may make unfamiliar demands on tutors: the supervision and integration of work experience, and the use of trainee-centred reviewing, including the use of log books and profiling. Both require the exercise of negotiating skills with industrial supervisors and students. Both areas are considered in detail in other publications, (MSC, 1981; MSC, 1982a; FEU, 1982b; WJEC, 1982) and need to be early on the agenda of programme teams.

The supportive actions required by tutors moving into vocational preparation also require time: time with colleagues in self-help workshops, time to visit other colleges to learn from and discuss other experiences; time to argue out ideas and approaches and to resolve teaching/learning problems as they occur. Some colleges are turning to regular, practical tutors' workshops as a medium for this support. Ideally, these are slotted into the weekly timetable, and bring together tutors from both general and vocational areas. The hazard is that these become mere talking shops, occupied with administration and ideology.

PREPAREDNESS OF TUTORS: SUMMARY

1. Vocational preparation demands adaptability and versatility, both in student:tutor relations, and in the provision of learning opportunities.

2. Guided self learning may be more effective in a negotiated curriculum than direct teaching.

3. Tutors' personal as well as professional qualities are important; in particular the possession of optimism about their students.

4. The negotiation and supervision of work experience, and the use of trainee centred reviewing, are areas for staff preparation.

5. Much of tutors' effectiveness depends upon the existence of team-work and support.

* * * * *

FLEXIBILITY OF RESOURCES

SECTION SIX

> "But what if they all want engineering?"[1]

CURRICULUM: RESOURCES NETWORK

There is a network effect between the curriculum and educational resources, which is revealed by attempts to increase flexibility. More student choice calls for smaller working groups, and a wider range of specialist tutoring, materials and equipment. Negotiated learning programmes require a time allocation for explaining, counselling and contracting. Individual learning agendas loosen the curriculum constraints imposed by established practice and external examining bodies. The effects of these inter-relationships are set out on the next page in which the factors of programme specification, degree of negotiation, student choice, size of learning unit, assumptions about student needs and tutor:student ratios are interconnected. The purpose of the network analysis is to identify the factors that should be considered, and therefore actions taken, in order to realise an increased degree of student choice and negotiation. It attempts to reinforce the argument that innovations cannot be grafted on to systems, themselves otherwise unchanged, and that curriculum decisions always have resource implications.

These implications are broadly of two types - related to total resources and to the most effective use of resource available. Clearly total resources devoted to vocational preparation courses have to increase because of the growth of student/trainee numbers in this area, but as far as the LEA/College is concerned this expenditure will be partly offset by reduced demands in other areas (compared to what they would have been had no vocational preparation programme come into existence) and partly by additional funding from outside agencies (eg MSC, Managing Agents). How far additional resources will be forthcoming is then a question of LEA policy and/or college priorities in relation to the total college role in serving the needs of the local community/industry.

The curriculum structure of vocational preparation is at its most effective when it incorporates the features illustrated in the bottom lines of the Curriculum Resources Network. Clearly this can be very resource intensive, but an imaginative approach to the more flexible use of resources can significantly offset these apparent additional resource commitments. The degree to which this can be achieved will depend on local circumstances and the existing efficiency of resource management - for example, staffing can be retrained and accommodation reallocated (even with the constraints of current budgets) in the light of new and pressing demands. Other matters, however, will involve negotiation with LEAs to achieve some further measures of internal flexibility. For example, the curriculum

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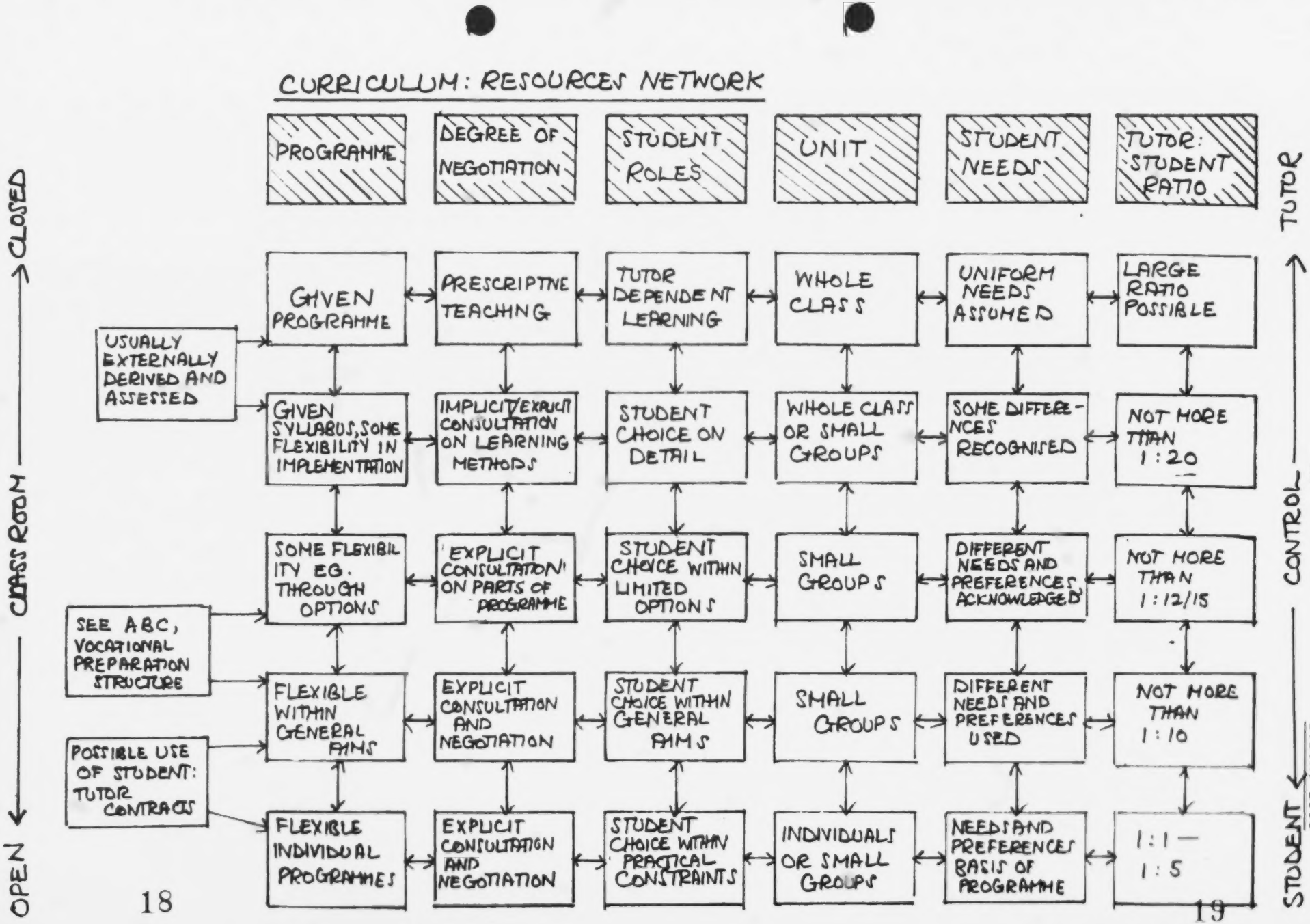
1. A tutor's quote.


CURRICULUM: RESOURCES NETWORK
PROGRAMME
DEGREE OF NEGOTIATION
STUDENT ROLES
UNIT
STUDENT NEEDS
TUTOR: STUDENT RATIO
OPEN
CLASS ROOM
CLOSED
TUTOR
CONTROL
STUDENT
USUALLY EXTERNALLY DERIVED AND ASSESSED
GIVEN PROGRAMME
PRESCRIPTIVE TEACHING
TUTOR DEPENDENT LEARNING
WHOLE CLASS
UNIFORM NEEDS ASSUMED
LARGE RATIO POSSIBLE
GIVEN SYLLABUS, SOME FLEXIBILITY IN IMPLEMENTATION
IMPLICIT/EXPLICIT CONSULTATION ON LEARNING METHODS
STUDENT CHOICE ON DETAIL
WHOLE CLASS OR SMALL GROUPS
SOME DIFFERENCES RECOGNISED
NOT MORE THAN 1:20
SOME FLEXIBILITY EG. THROUGH OPTIONS
EXPLICIT CONSULTATION ON PARTS OF PROGRAMME
STUDENT CHOICE WITHIN LIMITED OPTIONS
SMALL GROUPS
DIFFERENT NEEDS AND PREFERENCES ACKNOWLEDGED
NOT MORE THAN 1:12/15
SEE ABC, VOCATIONAL PREPARATION STRUCTURE
FLEXIBLE WITHIN GENERAL AIMS
EXPLICIT CONSULTATION AND NEGOTIATION
STUDENT CHOICE WITHIN GENERAL AIMS
SMALL GROUPS
DIFFERENT NEEDS AND PREFERENCES USED
NOT MORE THAN 1:10
POSSIBLE USE OF STUDENT: TUTOR CONTRACTS
FLEXIBLE INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMMES
EXPLICIT CONSULTATION AND NEGOTIATION
STUDENT CHOICE WITHIN PRACTICAL CONSTRAINTS
INDIVIDUALS OR SMALL GROUPS
NEEDS AND PREFERENCES BASIS OF PROGRAMME
1:1 — 1:5

I.B.N. 1968

elements of vocational preparation, with its emphasis on counselling and guidance, profiling systems and negotiation of individual programmes, have clear implications for a less rigid approach to tutor/lecturer 'contact hours', and it is likely that the concept of 'case loads' is more appropriate to such a structure. This does not necessarily imply the need for additional resources, but it will clearly be a more responsive arrangement. Ideally such change would be negotiated nationally through Burnham, but local arrangements agreed between LEAs and local teacher organisations could circumvent this problem.

In order for students to negotiate more flexible access to educational resources, organisations have to adapt the process of learning to that end - in terms of models of study, resources available, attendance patterns allowed, provision for variations in pace, and opportunities for interaction with peers and tutors etc. This process of flexibility is intended to optimise the autonomy of the learner and can be achieved by a number of practical measures (FEU, 1983):

Learner-centred provision for flexibility

i. By increasing use of independent learning systems - numeracy and communication workshops, individual and small group assignments, programmed learning materials, teaching on video and sound cassettes;

ii. by fully using the learning opportunities offered by work experience - and ensuring that this, in turn, offers flexibility;

iii. by easing student movement between schools, colleges, training workshops etc.

Staffing for flexibility

iv. by retraining, and appointing staff to teach generic skills, in preference to job-specific specialisms, eg office and computing studies, wood and metal-working skills, general engineering and motor-vehicle servicing, operating and servicing machinery; (Institute of Manpower Studies, 1981);

v. by appointing part-time staff - though there are disadvantages here in terms of staff development needs, and obstacles to teamwork;

vi. by rolling programmes of staff development responsive to changing needs;

Management for flexibility

vii. by equipping and reallocating space across departmental boundaries;

viii. by strengthening two-way communication with employers, trade unions, MSC and the Careers Service to ensure advance intelligence on changes in employment patterns, and

ix. by ensuring that changing resource needs are permanently on the agenda of college discussion and decision making;

x. by timetabling for team meetings;

xi. by providing media resources support to adapt and generate learning materials.

FLEXIBILITY OF RESOURCES: SUMMARY

1. For educational organisations to respond to both curriculum change and student choice, and therefore for negotiation to be possible, resources must be flexible.

2. Educational resources are inter-connected; increased flexibility in one area requires action in other areas, eg negotiated learning programmes have repercussions in size of working group, type of programme assessment etc.

3. This has resource and priority implications which have to be tackled by colleges and LEAs.

4. Educational resources can become more flexible through a combination of negotiating learner-centred processes, deploying and developing staffing resources, and reviewing, through management, the use of existing resources and likely future needs.

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STUDENT:TUTOR CONTRACTS

SECTION SEVEN

Existing contracts given to students on admission to college stress conformity to college rules. Negotiating student:tutor contracts opens up a richer potential for motivating learning and commitment:

> "We place great emphasis on the value of teacher - student, teaching-learning contracts because:
>
> 1. they convey vital messages about shared responsibility for what happens in learning situations;
>
> 2. they invite individuals to participate actively in their own development;
>
> 3. they are likely to produce more student commitment to learning on the basis that each of us is likely to be more committed to something we choose than to something that is imposed upon us;
>
> 4. they indicate interdependence, which is consistent with the hope in the life skills approach of reducing dependency by increasing personal skill and responsibility".
>
> (Hopson & Scally, 1981a)

Opinions vary on the employment of written student:tutor contracts as tools for defining a learning programme and, where their usefulness is accepted, on the form they should take. Such contracts were used by two of the colleges consulted in writing this document.

Student:tutor contracts represent an attempt to strengthen negotiation by recording what was agreed, for greater clarity and later reference. They also provide a foundation for re-negotiation when required, or where circumstances change. Contracts record reciprocal obligations, and, if stated in these terms, shift the emphasis away from teacher-centred choices, as does the formative use of profiling, with which contracts may be combined. If a contract is understood to be an agreement between teacher and teaching group, then it will obviously have to reflect on:

"What will be taught/learnt;

How the learning will take place." (Hopson & Scally, 1981b)

Who is responsible for what.

This is illustrated by the Grubb Institute report on the work of one staff group of the London Into Work Project in 1980: (Grubb Institute, 1980):

"If the contract were thought of in terms of setting out to the students the Aims of the Into Work project, the methods used to pursue those aims and the authority of staff and students within the structure of the project, then new students would be able to work out what staff were in reality accountable for, and what was the student's own responsibility.

If staff could keep alive the notion of their publicly committing themselves to the stated aims of the course; in fact, if the contract described what they were committing themselves to, then the student would have benchmark against which to evaluate staff behaviour and also to assess their own. The student could then, in discussion with the staff, set his or her own individual targets for learning within the framework for which the staff took authority".

"The kind of contract which existed at the time focused on what the student was going to do. It did not make any statements about what the staff committed themselves to".

A similar comment on the form of contract is made by a tutor with experience of negotiated learning:

"I think it somewhat fraudulent to negotiate on apparently equal terms and then conclude by asking the students alone to sign a contract. If contracts exist, then surely both student and tutors should sign them. I feel that a kind of unspoken contract exists anyway or should exist, if tutors and students establish a co-operative relationship".

STUDENT:TUTOR CONTRACTS - SUMMARY

1. If it is accepted that negotiation should be open and explicit; contracts provide a public record of agreement in the same way as agreed profiles record assessment.

2. Student:tutor contracts help to place relationships on a business-like footing, and like their industrial counter-parts can have short lives, and be amended and rewritten after experience and reflection.

* * * * *

AN EXAMPLE OF A RECIPROCAL AGREEMENT

STUDENT:COLLEGE AGREEMENT

AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME

1. To develop physical and manipulative skills in construction work.

2. To develop the ability to work as a member of a team.

3. To improve standards of communication, literacy and numeracy.

STUDENT	COLLEGE
1. To work for 10 hours a week in the Constuction Workshop at the skills of brickwork and plastering.	1. To provide access to the Construction Workshop, and 10 hours specialist instruction in brickwork and plastering.
2. To co-operate with other members of working groups, contributing to the team effort, and accepting the tasks involved in this.	2. To arrange work so that student has experience of working in groups and teams.
3. To take on extra work in literacy and numeracy.	3. To provide specialist teaching in literacy and numeracy, and access to the communication and mathematics workshops.
Date:	Date:
Signed:	Signed:
Additions Date	Additions Date

AN EXAMPLE

STUDENT:COLLEGE CONTRACT

This agreement is made between two parties:

1. A College as Scheme Provider. Name of representative. .....

2. A Student. Name .....

Names of Scheme .....

Both parties freely agree that for the length of attendance on the scheme, they will treat each other in a reasonable and fair way at all times. When problems arise, both college and student agree to talk them through until a fair and reasonable solution is found, which is agreed between them. After our first discussion, both parties have agreed that the things listed below will be undertaken during attandance on the scheme.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

.....

Signed - College

.....

Signed - Student

Date .....

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